

SANTA MONICA CITY JAIL
1685 Main Street
Santa Monica
Los Angeles County
California

HABS CA-2803
CA-2803

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SANTA MONICA CITY JAIL

HABS No. CA-2803

- Location: 1685 Main Street, Santa Monica, California. The Santa Monica City Jail is the northeast wing of City Hall. The Santa Monica City Hall faces Main Street to the west, and is bounded by Fourth Street on the east, State Highway Route 1 on the north, and Olympic Drive on the south. City Hall is situated on the north corner of Lot 902, Block 12 of the Bandini Tract (Assessor's ID 4290012-902).
- Present Owner and Occupant: The City of Santa Monica.
- Present Use: The Jail is vacant. City Hall continues to serve as the center of government in the City of Santa Monica.
- Significance: The Santa Monica City Hall is designed in a Public Works Administration (PWA) Moderne style popular in the 1930s by prominent Los Angeles architects, Joseph M. Estep, and Donald B. Parkinson. From 1938-39, City Hall was erected by contractors Campbell and Kelly. The project was largely funded by the federal government's New Deal-era Public Works Administration program, with the remaining funds coming from city taxes and the property sale of the original City Hall on Fourth Street and Broadway. PWA projects commonly incorporated many building and design trades on each project, including masonry, woodwork, tile work and metalwork, sculpture and mural painting, in addition to employing artists and artisans who designed and crafted these decorative arts. The construction of the Santa Monica City Hall was completed in late 1939 and totaled \$168,000. The Jail located in the northeast wing of City Hall is original to the building, and served as the local Santa Monica Police Department Jail until 2002. Not only does the building represent an outstanding example of PWA Moderne style architecture, it has also played an important role in Santa Monica's political, social, and civic history.
- Historian(s): Jon L. Wilson and Margarita J. Wuellner, 2008.
- Project Information: This architectural recordation project, an Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) Level II documentation for the Santa Monica City Jail, was prepared for The City of Santa Monica, Santa Monica, California. The documentation was undertaken by

PCR Services Corporation (PCR) of Santa Monica. The survey, research and written documentation was conducted and prepared by PCR historians, Jon Wilson, M. Arch., Senior Architectural Historian, and Margarita J. Wuellner, Ph.D., Principal Architectural Historian. The HABS photography was completed by Tavo Olmos, Positive Image Photographic Services, Irvine, California. The project was conducted between June and September 2008.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of Construction: The building was constructed between 1938 and 1939.
2. Architects: Joseph M. Estep and Donald B. Parkinson, Associated Architects.
3. Original and subsequent owners, uses: The City of Santa Monica. The Jail wing of City Hall contained the City of Santa Monica Jail, the jail kitchen, and the jail guard sleeping quarters until it was closed in 2002.
4. Builder/Contractor: Campbell and Kelly (Contractors).
5. Original plans and construction: There is a full set of plans drafted by the architects Donald B. Parkinson and J.M. Estep, Associated Architects, dated August 4, 1938. Drawings that include the jail are the basement and foundation plan, first floor plan, second floor plan, third floor plan, roof plan, elevations (2 sheets), sections (2 sheets), and door and toilet details.¹
6. Alterations and additions: Overall, the Jail is largely unaltered and retains the majority of its character-defining features and spaces. Major alterations include the 1958 three-story brick masonry addition attached to the rear of City Hall adjacent to the Jail (this was later removed). The addition was designed by H. Harold Melstrom to function as offices for the police department, the traffic engineer, and the recreation department. The addition occupied 36,000 square feet and measured 70'0" in width and 146'0" in length. There was another addition completed in 1977, constructed to accommodate the police department expansion that included a new locker room, sauna, and whirlpool (also removed). Concrete wheelchair ramps were constructed in 1982 and 1983 to provide disability access.

Changes physically present but not represented in the building permits enumerated below include replacement toilets in the jail cells, six replacement shower stalls, installation of surveillance equipment on third floor and black paint on bars of cell at

¹ Copies of these are in the field notes.

northeast corner of third floor. Other minor alterations include the addition of replacement windows, kitchen equipment, and new bathroom fixtures.

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|------------|---|
| 12-27-1938 | Original permit for construction of City Hall. Permit No. B444
Description: Original building permit for city hall; indicated three stories, concrete exterior walls, and 132 rooms. |
| 07-23-1958 | Architect: J.A Melstrom. Contractor: Cal-Western Construction, Inc. Permit No. B24341. Description: Addition of police building; indicated three stories, masonry and concrete walls, concrete floor joists. |
| 10-21-1966 | Architect: Santa Monica Department of Engineering. Contractor: Motz Engineering. Permit No. B38590. Description: Remodeling of police buildings, removal and relocation of interior walls, electrical and plumbing work. |
| 9-13-1977 | Architect: Don M. Ramos. Contractor: Hal Summers. Permit No. B50200. Description: New locker room, sauna and whirlpool for police department, addition measures 52'2" x 21'9," one – story, frame and stucco exterior walls, total floor area of 3,552 square feet. |
| 07-23-1980 | Contractor: Scott E. Campbell Company. Permit No. 53259.
Description: Installation of fire sprinklers. |
| 06-29-1982 | Architect: Niver Engineering. Contractor: Hal Summers. Permit No. 55207. Description: Addition to second floor of police department building. |
| 07-25-1983 | Architect: City of Santa Monica Engineering Division. B.P Kent Company Inc. Permit No. 56047. Description: Construction of concrete ramp at north wing of the hallway in the main city hall building. |

B. Historical Context

Santa Monica

In 1875, the original town site of Santa Monica was surveyed including all of the land extending from Colorado Street on the south to Montana Avenue on the north, and from Twenty-Sixth Street on the east to the Pacific Ocean on the west. Between 1893 and the 1920s, the community operated as a tourist attraction, visited mostly by wealthy patrons. Those areas just outside of the incorporated city limits were semi-rural in setting and were populated with scattered residences. After the advent of the automobile in the 1920s, Santa Monica experienced a significant building boom, which included the

development of the area known as Ocean Park, south of the downtown commercial district.

The downtown commercial district (Central Business District)² is roughly defined by Wilshire Boulevard to the north, Second Street to the west, Colorado Avenue to the south, and Fourth Street (south of Santa Monica Boulevard) and Seventh Street (north of Santa Monica Boulevard) to the east. Most buildings are commercial in function, with a small scattering of residential uses. The most prevalent styles are those associated with the 1920s and 1930s, including: Spanish Colonial, Art Deco, and Classically-influenced vernacular structures. These buildings range from one to twelve stories in height, and are clad in a variety of materials including stucco, brick, and concrete.³ Most buildings however, have undergone remodeling and retain few of their original character defining features.

Ocean Park developed somewhat independently from that of the rest of Santa Monica. Separated from the north by a gully, which today is filled by the Santa Monica freeway, Ocean Park was initially orientated toward the beach, where a series of piers and other tourist attractions were erected in the late nineteenth century by Abbot Kinney and his associates. In the years following the introduction of rail transportation, building activities intensified. Recognizing that a rail link to Los Angeles would be the key to development of the area, in 1893, Kinney donated land for the right of way and a depot to the Santa Fe railroad. The community itself took the name Ocean Park in 1895. In 1898, the Ocean Park Pier was developed, with adjacent Pier Street one of the area's early commercial streets.

Main Street became the commercial spine of the Ocean Park community after the turn of the century, servicing both permanent residents and visitors who lived in the cottages, bungalows, and courts, which sprang up as far east as Lincoln and beyond. By the close of the 1910s, a substantial portion of Ocean Park had been improved. By the 1930s, buildings occupied most of the available parcels in the area and older improvements were being removed to provide space for newer development. During the 1940s, the pattern of development in Ocean Park remained fairly small-scale, continuing in the post World War II era, with the result that Ocean Park is characterized by a multi-layered and diverse historical legacy in terms of age, styles, and building types.

A wide arroyo used by the railroads (present-day Olympic Boulevard) separated the downtown and Ocean Park until the construction of the Main Street Bridge in 1925. Once the bridge was in place, plans began for the development of a new civic center. In 1936, the *Santa Monica Outlook* and the Santa Monica Realty Board sponsored a competition for its design.⁴ The first building to be constructed, the Santa Monica City Hall, was located immediately to the southeast of the bridge, on the eastern half of a forty-acre site

² Tearnen et al, City of Santa Monica Historic Resources Inventory, 1998.

³ Leslie Heumann Associates, City of Santa Monica Historic Resources Inventory Phase 3 Final Report, 1994.

⁴ Santa Monica *Mirror*, 1999.

secured from the Southern Pacific Railroad. Completed in 1938, the City Hall was designed in the Art Deco style by Los Angeles architects, Joseph M. Estep and Donald Parkinson. Subsequently, the Los Angeles County Courthouse was added in 1951, and the Civic Auditorium was completed in 1958.

Santa Monica City Hall and Jail

At the turn of the twentieth century, the first Santa Monica City Hall was constructed at the corner of Fourth Street and Santa Monica Boulevard. A \$35,000 bond measure was approved by Santa Monica voters in 1901 to construct a new City Hall and Jail.⁵ Initially, the city wanted to construct the new City Hall at the southeast corner of Third Street and Utah (now Broadway); however, the city could not proceed without condemnation proceedings. Thus, the city purchased another site at Fourth Street and Santa Monica Boulevard for \$4,800. The original City Hall was designed by H.X. Goetz in a Spanish Revival style and dedicated on March 19, 1903.⁶ Later, in 1912, the City Hall was remodeled.

By the 1920s and 1930s, the City Hall had inadequate space to accommodate the growing city staff. In 1924, Santa Monica city officials generated plans to replace the small structure, but the plans were not approved.⁷ Subsequently, a citizen's committee was formed to organize the planning and financing of a new building; the committee decided to sell the existing City Hall, to apply for a federal grant, and to increase city taxes. Therefore, the City Hall was sold for \$168,000, a PWA grant of \$158,787 was awarded, and the remainder of \$28,000 was collected through taxes. The city purchased the land for the new City Hall from the Southern Pacific Railway Company on land previously used as the city's freight yard and depot. The new City Hall was designed by prominent Los Angeles architects, Joseph M. Estep, and Donald B. Parkinson, and constructed by contractors, Campbell and Kelly. Artist Stanton Macdonald-Wright painted interior murals in the building and the Gladding McBean Company supplied the decorative tile. The existing Jail, located in the northeast wing of City Hall, is original to the building and served as the Jail for the Santa Monica Police Department until 2002.

The construction of the Santa Monica City Hall was completed in late 1939 and costs totaled \$168,000. The building was dedicated on November 24, 1939, under the democratic principals of "truth, liberty and tolerance."⁸ The construction, partly financed by a Public Works Administration (PWA) grant, provided jobs and pride to the Santa Monica community who were struggling to overcome the hardships of the Great Depression. Its completion was hailed as a victory for cooperative action, as well as the result of integrated efforts between residents, officials and the Federal government.

⁵ Santa Monica City Hall Historic Structures Report, Historic Resources Group, Vol. I: Historical Research, Investigation & Field Survey, April 10, 2003, IB-1.

⁶ Charles S. Warren, *History of Santa Monica Bay Region* (Santa Monica: Cawston, 1934), 65.

⁷ "Santa Monica," *Southwest Builder and Contractor*, 9 May 1954, 60.

⁸ City of Santa Monica Historic Resources Inventory, 2.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: Constructed in 1938-39, the Jail is located in the east corner of the north, three-story rear wing of the Moderne style Santa Monica City Hall. The form, architectural details, and materials reflect the influences of the Moderne style, which is evident in the City Hall's balanced massing, faceted corners, and smooth lines. The U-shaped building has symmetrical exterior elevations with decorative bands, fluted pilasters, and recessed vertically aligned casement windows. The roof is flat with ledge coping at the roof line. The utilitarian jail interior is comprised of painted board-formed concrete walls and floors. The interior detention blocks located on all three floors are original to the Jail.

2. Condition of Fabric: The Jail is in fair condition. It appears that the Jail has been regularly maintained over the years.

B. Description of Exterior

1. Overall Dimensions: The three-story Jail is primarily rectangular with overall dimensions of approximately 53'-10" long by 28'-6" wide. The enclosed exterior stairwell shaft attached to the southeast corner of the Jail is approximately 20'-4" tall by 7'-9" wide.

2. Foundations: The Jail sits on a reinforced concrete foundation with spread footings at the columns and a full basement.

3. Walls: The exterior walls are painted board-formed reinforced concrete.

4. Structural System, Framing: The structural system consists of exterior reinforced-concrete bearing walls and reinforced-concrete girders and beams.

5. Stairways: There are three stairways. There is an enclosed cast-in-place concrete stairway attached to the southeast corner of the Jail that provides access to all three floors and the roof. There is an interior metal straight stairway located in the main corridor of the Jail that provides immediate access to the three Jail floors. The narrow metal staircase includes metal treads, risers, and apron, with metal tube handrails. There is another cast-in-place concrete stairway that provides access to all three floors of both the Jail and office.

6. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: There is one contemporary flush-panel, single-light external doorway located on the east stairwell elevation.

b. Windows: There are twenty-four original windows located on the north, south and east Jail elevations. The south and east elevations each have nine operable awning windows on the exterior with interior spaced metal-bars. A window on the first floor of the south elevation is inoperable and boarded. The west elevation has six exterior operable awning windows with interior evenly spaced painted metal bars. The window frames are metal and the glazing is textured, metal-wired, translucent glass. Several of the windows are altered; either the windows are new with transparent glazing, or window frames are original, but the panes have been replaced with transparent glazing. The southeast corner enclosed stairway has no windows, but originally the north stairway elevation had a single column of windows.

7. Roof: The roof is flat and covered with asphalt. There is no cornice or eaves at the intersection of the vertical walls and the roof, however, there is coping at the roof line.

C. Description of Interior

1. Floor Plans: The Jail occupies the eastern end of the north wing of City Hall. The rectangular three-story Jail contains three floors of detention cells that are all configured in the same manner and have identical plans. The detention block, oriented north to south, consists of two rows of five holding cells separated by an interior structural wall. In general, a holding cell includes two sheet metal bunk beds attached to a metal panel wall, a contemporary stainless steel lavatory and water-closet, and an evenly spaced metal bar wall and door. The circulation halls adjacent to the cells on the outer walls have high ceilings with exposed concrete board-formed concrete walls, exposed concrete beamed ceilings, and square painted copper alloy incandescent ceiling-mounted lighting fixtures.

The Jail floors are accessed by three interior staircases. An enclosed exterior stairway attached to the southeast corner of the Jail leads to the rooftop. The stairway has unfinished concrete treads and risers, and a painted metal handrail. An exterior door opens onto the southeast exterior stairway and also onto the primary circulation hallway that connects the Jail to the north wing of City Hall. A narrow interior staircase adjacent to the detention block leads to the second and third floors. The narrow staircase includes steel treads, risers, and apron, with metal tube handrails and has an original fluorescent lighting fixture. Another cast-in-place concrete stairway provides access to all three floors of both the Jail and office. There is also an elevator car and shaft located in the southwest corner of the primary circulation hall. The elevator car reflects the Moderne style with its vents, round light and decorative yellow cornice.

The First Floor Plan

The first floor plan of the Jail consists of a detention cell block, a primary circulation hallway, and a “drunk bunk.” The primary circulation hallway separates the detention cell block, located to the north of the hallway, from the “drunk bunk,” located to the south. A cell with a solid metal door with a very small window occupies the southwest corner of the south detention cell block. The “drunk bunk” has painted board-formed concrete walls and a painted steel bar wall with one door. An eight-inch raised concrete platform intended for use as seating surrounds the periphery of the north, south and east walls. A metal mesh ceiling secures the top of the “drunk bunk,” under the exposed concrete ceiling.

The Second Floor Plan

The second floor has the same plan as the first floor, but instead of a “drunk bunk” a kitchen and pantry occupy the area south of the circulation hallway along the southern elevation. The kitchen and pantry have painted lath and plaster walls, wood cabinets, and kitchen equipment including a gas range and metal hood vent.

The Third Floor

The third floor also has a similar plan as the first and second floors, except a bathroom and two officer’s sleeping quarters occupy the area next to the south elevation. The interior Jail stairway terminates at the third floor, while the southeast exterior stairway continues to the roof.

2. Stairways: There are three stairways. One steel plate interior staircase is located within the main corridor that connects the ground floor to the third floor. The narrow staircase includes steel treads, risers, and apron, with metal tube handrails and an original fluorescent light fixture. There is also an enclosed exterior stair shaft leading to the roof with unfinished concrete treads and raisers, and a painted metal handrail located in the southeast corner of the Jail. Another cast-in-place concrete stairway provides access to all three floors of both the Jail and office.

3. Flooring: The interior floors are polished concrete.

4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: The interior walls are painted board-formed concrete except the kitchen, which has lath and plaster walls. The ceiling has 1’0” x 1’0” resilient tile composition ceilings from a later remodeling effort.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: There are twenty-nine cell doors composed of evenly spaced painted metal bars. Each floor has two evenly-spaced painted metal bar doors leading into the detention block. The first floor

has one solitary confinement cell with a painted evenly-spaced metal bar door, backed with a solid painted panel that includes a small window. The first floor exterior stairwell entrance into the jail has a double security door, the first door is a flat panel painted wood door and the second door has evenly spaced painted metal bars and painted metal mesh. There are also eighteen interior single-panel painted wood doors. Each floor has a flat panel, single light elevator door. There is one contemporary exterior entrance door located on the east elevation of the exterior stairwell.

b. Windows: There are twenty-four original windows located on the north, south and east Jail elevations. The south and east elevations have eight operable awning windows on the exterior with interior evenly spaced painted metal-bars. A window on the first floor of the south elevation is inoperable and boarded. The west elevation has six operable awning windows on the exterior and interior with evenly spaced painted metal bars. The window frames are metal and the glazing is textured, metal-wired, translucent glass. Several of the windows are altered; either the windows are new with transparent glazing or they have original window frames, but the panes were replaced with transparent glazing. The southeast corner enclosed stairway has no windows, but originally the north stairway elevation had a single column of awning windows.

6. Decorative Features: The utilitarian wing was designed to serve as a Jail, thus the interiors have minimal decorative features. The OTIS elevator is painted sheet metal with a copper alloy frame and control plate. The elevator reflects the style of the overall building with its Moderne vents, round light, linoleum floor with an ornamental boarder and decorative yellow cornice.

7. Hardware: The windows retain the majority of their original hardware including the window cranks, hinges, and door closures.

D. Site

1. Historical Landscape Design: The existing landscape adjacent to the Jail on the north, south, and west sides have been altered from the original over the years. The current landscape includes a grass lawn and xeriscape landscaping, and a newly landscaped area in the rear where the police department addition was located.

2. Outbuildings: None.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings

Original Architectural Construction Drawings for Santa Monica City Hall,
Donald B. Parkinson & J.M. Estep Associated Architects, August 4, 1938.

Santa Monica City Hall Seismic Retrofit: Demolition Drawings.

Santa Monica City Hall Historic Jail Tenant Improvement Drawings, Kajima
Associates, Inc.

B. Early Views

Santa Monica Public Library Photo Collection:

1. Construction of City Hall, 1685 Main Street, August 4, 1939 - City of Santa
Monica (3 Photos).

2. Santa Monica City Hall, 1685 Main Street, built in 1939 - Randy Young
Collection.

C. Bibliography

1. Primary and Unpublished Sources:

City of Santa Monica Building Department, Building Division, Building Permits.

2. Secondary and Published Sources:

City of Santa Monica, Santa Monica Historic Resources Inventory, Phases 1 and
2 and City of Santa Monica Historic Resources Inventory (Merged
Inventories as of December 2003), and, Parkinson Field Associates,
Historic Resources Inventory Update, 1995.

Klein, Jake. *Santa Monica Then and Now*. Utah: Gibbs Smith Publisher, 2003.

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Survey Workbook (excerpts). Sacramento, CA: State of California, 1986.

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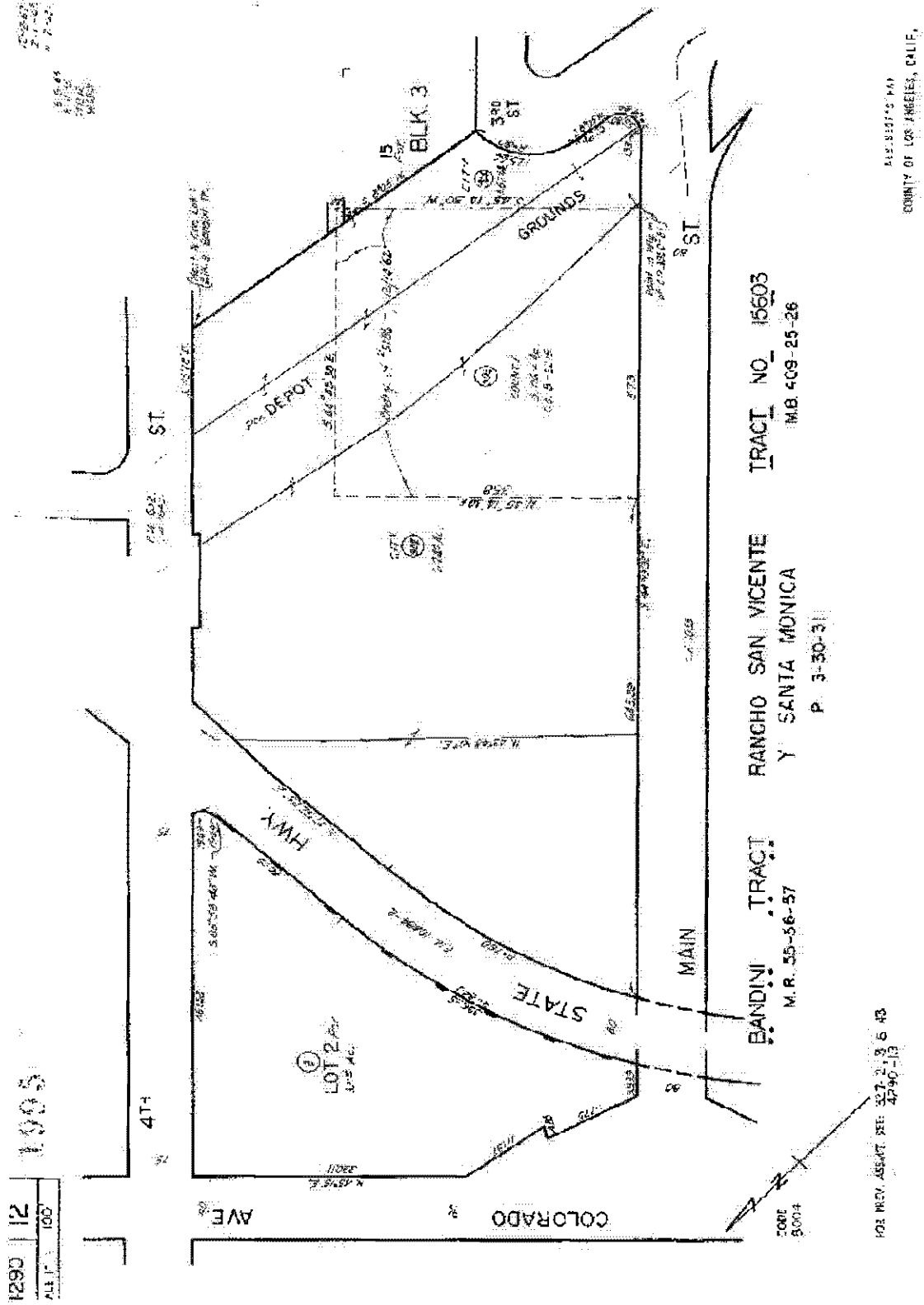
Santa Monica City Hall Historic Structures Report, Historic Resources Group,
Volumes 1 & 2, April 10, 2003.

Santa Monica Historical Resources Inventory 1985-86 Final Report.

Santa Monica Historical Resources Inventory Phase 3 Final Report.

Santa Monica Historic Resources Inventory Update, September 1995.

Assessor's Tract Map



Current Aerial

